

Law Enforcement Section

James D. Fields, Chief

The Law Enforcement Section is responsible for the prompt, orderly and effective enforcement of all laws of Chapter 20, Code of West Virginia, and rules promulgated under that authority. Of primary importance is the protection of West Virginia's wildlife to the degree that it is not endangered by unlawful activities. A highly visible, uniformed conservation officer patrol is the only viable way to accomplish this mission. Prevention and apprehension are crucial to the enforcement goal, and the conservation officer is meeting that goal. In West Virginia, no species of wildlife is jeopardized because of illegal taking.

Law Enforcement Program

On June 30, 2003, the Law Enforcement Section employed 121 uniformed conservation officers and 13 office support staff.

Conservation officers are subject to call 24 hours a day and during declared emergency situations. Officers respond to floods on an annual basis somewhere in the state. During the past two years, after 9/11, the Law Enforcement Section has taken on additional duties in the area of security for the many chemical and power plants along the rivers. In order to alleviate the budget shortfall in other areas of conservation law enforcement, money has been requested through the State Office of Emergency Services to reimburse the ever-dwindling hunting and fishing license accounts. To date, no funds have been received, but the outlook is good that expenses will be reimbursed.

In cooperation with the Huntington Coast Guard District, conservation officers from the Parkersburg district continue to provide daily Homeland Security boat patrols in the Marietta Pool of the Ohio River and inland patrols from the Belleville Locks to the Willow Island Power Plant.

In Fiscal Year 2003, conservation officers investigated 8,039 complaints, including 2,274 wildlife damage investigations, and issued 6,542 citations and 3,405 warnings.

Officer Training

The Law Enforcement Section takes pride in the training program. Officers log thousands of hours each year sharpening their skills and preparing for the worst. Topics covered

during Fiscal Year 2003 include: Prosecuting Attorney's Institute Seminar, Domestic Terrorism, Surveillance Camera Use, Marine Patrol Course and a Running Man Target system.

In addition, all six districts conducted regional training which consisted of one unit of Defensive Tactics and three units of Firearms instruction.

Specialized courses were once again made available to officers. Courses ranged from FBI sponsored Intelligence classes to the National Boating Safety Course conducted at Yorktown, Virginia.



Canoe and swiftwater training for conservation officers.

Officers also attended several out-of-state seminars at the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators Conference and The International Hunter Education Association Conference.

The Section assists other law enforcement agencies by providing instructors for training to meet the Law Enforcement Training Committee standards.

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Special conservation officers from the Wildlife Resources and Parks and Recreation Sections have been trained in defensive tactics and firearms. Special conservation officers from the Division of Forestry have been trained in arson investigation and evidence collection.

Hunter Education Program

The mandatory Hunter Education Program in West Virginia continues to be a success. During Fiscal Year 2003, a total of 295 classes was held statewide, producing 8,194 graduates. Volunteer instructors remain the backbone of the Hunter Education Program, driving more than 35,000 miles and donating more than 8,000 hours. Conservation officers also participated in classes, working more than 2,300 hours and driving more than 16,000 miles.



Conservation officers lead a hunter education class.

Continuing with the alternative audience philosophy, the Hunter Education Program conducted several "Special Needs" classes and special hunts for the disabled. The hunt at Snowshoe Resort during December 2002, was filmed and aired by Bill Rock of the Outdoor Channel. This year, 10 individuals participated with a 100 percent success rate.

In continued efforts to purchase up-to-date materials for classes, 330 firearms were purchased and have been distributed. A set (six action types) was distributed to each county volunteer instructor team to be used in the Hunter Education Program. A trailer was purchased for the program to haul supplies for live fire exercises, Youth Challenges, etc. Also, new videos were purchased.

The Law Enforcement Section maintains a toll-free Hunter Education Hotline providing class schedules to anyone interested in attending a class. The number is 1-800-243-9968. Class information and registration is also available on the web.

During Fiscal Year 2003, West Virginia experienced 34 Class A hunting incidents, resulting in two fatalities. There were nine incidents involving falling from a tree stand (Class B incidents) which resulted in one additional fatality. The student manual was revised in 2002 to address this area of need and the end result was a 50 percent reduction in tree stand incidents. During the Spring Gobbler Season of 2003, there was only one incident and no fatalities.

Officers across the state participated in numerous sporting and hunting shows and attended summer camps and other special events to promote Hunter Education.



Entrants in the Youth Challenge receive instructions from conservation officers during the annual Hunting And Fishing Days Celebration at Stonewall Jackson Lake State Park.

The Law Enforcement Section has worked closely with the media to spread the safe hunting message through TV and radio interviews.

Boating Safety Education Program

West Virginia has more than 53,000 boats registered, representing more than 100,000 residents and many non-residents who take advantage of the recreational activities on the waters of this state. Operator inexperience and lack of training contribute to the number of accidents which occur each year on state waterways. Persons operating water craft under the influence of drugs or alcohol also contribute to the accident rate.

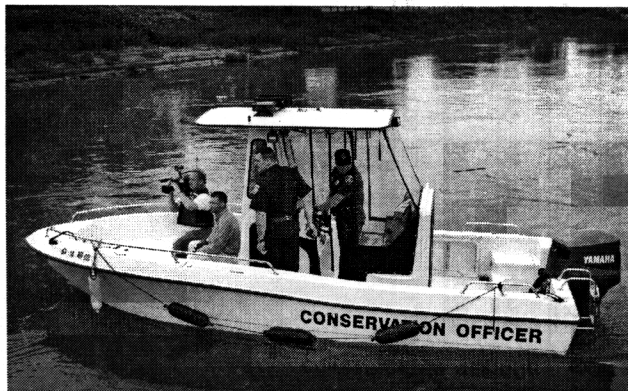
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Every year, a Boating Safety Class is offered in each of the 55 counties; however, few take advantage of them. The mandatory Boating Safety Education Course took effect January 1, 2001. The U. S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, the U. S. Power Squadrons and the Division of Natural Resources, in a cooperative effort, are teaching these classes.

In Fiscal Year 2003, 26 classes were taught and 333 students successfully completed the course. This represents an increase from last year. These statistics do not include the efforts of the Auxiliary or Power Squadrons.

Anyone born after December 31, 1986, is required to successfully complete the National Association of Boating Law Administrators' approved course before operating a motorboat. This will certainly help remedy the high accident/fatality rate. Officers worked with the media to spread the word on mandatory education, but people are slow about enrolling in a class. Even placing reminders in boat license renewal mailings failed to increase enrollment.

The Law Enforcement Section also participated in National Safe Boating Week and National Recreational Boating Week with news releases and various TV and radio interviews.



A television cameraman is given a tour of the Ohio River in a DNR Law Enforcement patrol boat.

Whitewater Enforcement Program

The Law Enforcement Section fulfilled many duties in connection with commercial whitewater rafting in West Virginia. This Section is responsible for administration of the regulations for the industry, including issuance of all licenses, collection of fees, and maintenance of files and records for the Division.

Conservation officers patrol whitewater rivers to observe commercial outfitters for compliance with regulations and license requirements and to conduct counts on various rivers. In Fiscal Year 2003, there were 38 licensed outfitters, and more than 218,243 individuals traversed whitewater rivers as customers on commercial trips. In addition, the Law Enforcement Section is in the process of training all conservation officers in Swift Water Rescue. This will give officers the skills needed to deal with incidents on whitewater rivers and in flood situations.

Law Enforcement Activity July 1, 2002 - June 30, 2003

DISTRICT	CLASSIFICATION OF HOURS			LEAVE			ARRESTS			WARNINGS			PUBLIC MEETINGS		COMPLAINTS		
	SPECIAL DETAIL HOURS	REGULAR WORK HOURS	TOTAL HOURS	ANNUAL	SICK	OTHER	CHAPTER 20 ARRESTS	CHAPTER 22 ARRESTS	OTHER ARRESTS	CHAPTER 20 WARNINGS	CHAPTER 22 WARNINGS	OTHER WARNINGS	NUMBER	CONTACTS	RECEIVED	WILDLIFE DAMAGE INVEST	OTHERS INVESTIGATED
ONE	426.5	39420.5	39847.0	3322.25	1138.00	3506.75	1073	53	91	212	123	36	92	8048	1532	285	1093
TWO	22.0	32112.0	32134.0	3060.00	820.00	3484.00	886	25	114	656	61	80	118	7544	1776	522	1277
THREE	0.0	32722.0	32722.0	3713.50	1231.00	3930.50	899	21	90	481	101	89	143	12962	1422	626	748
FOUR	94.0	32331.0	32425.0	2530.00	794.00	2516.00	790	32	72	397	76	61	54	3080	1296	435	903
FIVE	1507.0	31928.5	33435.5	2941.00	544.00	2864.50	1089	40	64	638	59	32	73	9755	1097	198	843
SIX	1382.0	25216.0	26598.0	2470.00	504.00	2644.00	1001	39	163	177	85	41	151	10701	1117	208	901
TOTALS:	3431.5	193730.0	197161.5	18036.75	5031.00	18945.75	5738	210	594	2561	505	339	631	52090	8240	2274	5765

July 1, 2002 - June 30, 2003 Automobile Operation

DISTRICT	TOTAL MILES	GASOLINE			LUBRICANTS			OTHER COSTS	TOTAL OPERATION COST	MILES PER GALLON
		GALLONS		COST	OIL		Grease			
		COMMERCIAL	STATE		QUARTS	COST				
ONE	368941	28207.0	0.0	\$39,278.00	426	\$713.20	\$251.67	\$26,975.01	\$67,217.88	13.1
TWO	313480	20763.0	0.0	\$24,466.72	393	\$648.50	\$97.75	\$14,598.70	\$39,811.67	15.1
THREE	337969	23553.0	0.0	\$33,724.35	341	\$659.06	\$205.06	\$16,058.73	\$50,647.20	14.3
FOUR	336765	24118.0	0.0	\$36,614.37	515	\$1,174.57	\$286.75	\$21,362.40	\$59,438.09	14.0
FIVE	361156	23393.0	0.0	\$36,424.82	392	\$868.58	\$147.72	\$28,296.65	\$65,737.77	15.4
SIX	309721	23544.0	0.0	\$35,048.33	285	\$816.31	\$76.28	\$15,348.46	\$51,289.38	13.2
TOTALS	2028032	143578.0	0.0	\$205,556.59	2352	\$4,880.22	\$1,065.23	\$122,639.95	\$334,141.99	14.1

Boat Operation

DISTRICT	GASOLINE		OIL		MISC COSTS	TOTAL COSTS	BOAT HOURS
	GALLONS	COST	QUARTS	COST			
ONE	2099.0	\$3,538.76	0	\$0.00	\$17,721.62	\$21,260.38	484.0
TWO	42.0	\$95.50	0	\$0.00	\$1,611.17	\$1,706.67	151.0
THREE	392.0	\$773.82	23	\$57.35	\$2,594.50	\$3,425.67	223.0
FOUR	129.0	\$233.10	0	\$0.00	\$3,704.57	\$3,937.67	150.0
FIVE	678.0	\$1,017.94	82	\$363.70	\$2,459.27	\$3,840.91	288.0
SIX	3022.0	\$3,955.83	317	\$1,196.72	\$4,701.12	\$9,853.67	467.0
TOTALS	6362.0	\$9,614.95	422	\$1,617.77	\$32,792.25	\$44,024.97	1763